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The Southern Star

ISSUE #13

Newsletter for the Dominican Sisters of Wanganui

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"Take courage and do not evade suffering. Hold fast to a holy will that concentrates only on what Christ loved ... When our will is thus armed it will be granted strength."

St Catherine of Siena

LETTER FROM MOTHER prioress GENERAL

Mother Mary Micaela O.P.

Dear Families, Friends, Ex-pupils, and Benefactors,

The second to last page of this newsletter is occupied by a collage on vocations. It reminds me of the experience of setting up our Congregation when God kept sending us lovely candidates for the religious life. At first He thought our life would not be complete without a "Smasher" and so He sent us a Sister who had a heart of gold but who also had the capacity to destroy household objects. Then He sent us a "Camper". This is the kind of Sister who loves to take the girls on camps. She scrambles through caves with them and goes swimming with them, all in her habit. Finally, the Lord gave us a "Laminator". This is the kind of Sister who makes wonderful educational displays for the children, for example, timelines, summaries, genealogical tables, and copies of artworks – and laminates them. Thus, the Lord looked at what He had given us and found it good – and He said that now we would have to educate and cultivate our own future vocations.

So we have given talks on vocations from Brisbane to Perth and from Sydney to Melbourne, not to mention from North Cape to the Bluff in New Zealand. Also we have given talks in various overseas venues such as Singapore and San Jose, St Mary's, Kansas, Winona and Dilwyn. We have been delighted with the number of young ladies who have tried their vocations with us, which is all we or the Lord want them to do. However, I have long been haunted by two books whose views combined seem to me to suggest that even more young ladies should be checking up on a vocation.

The two books are Richard Butler's *"Religious Vocation, an Unnecessary Mystery"* and William J. Slattery's *"Heroism and Genius: How Catholic Priests Helped to Build – and can Help Rebuild – Western Civilisation"*.

Richard Butler, a Dominican Priest, starts from the premise that everyone has a vocation. BUT, he says, not all may be able to follow their vocation, anything from a temperament unsuited to Community Life, to a

physical disability, to an aged parent needing care, may legitimately prevent the young person following a vocation. What Father Richard Butler wants to prevent is people thinking about a vocation as though it's a sinking feeling in your stomach or a romantic feeling in your head. With scorn he quotes those vocations missionaries who tell young people to "look into your heart" and to "ask yourself what God wants of you". Fr Butler says that approaches like this often discourage genuine vocations who are left waiting for pink clouds and rose petals.

William Slattery in "Heroism and Genius" shows in his survey of the role of the Catholic Priesthood in civilising the West, that the Church must have in every age convinced and educated clergy and nuns who can raise the standard of the society in which they live. If people can come forward to teach today's society the eternal truths, we may still save the Church, which is in the most wretched state it has been in for 2,000 years, because people no longer believe there is such a thing as absolute right and wrong. Even the Pope appears to have said that there is no Hell.

So, vocations are not a matter of pink clouds and rose-petals. It's a matter of freedom to serve. All we are asking is that young women examine whether they are free to serve the Church, and if they are free give a vocation a try. The prayer and work religious do is highly rewarding. In one place where our Sisters teach, we found that only a month of solid care and teaching by the Sisters produced a wonderful change in the girls, for the better. Results like that are highly encouraging!

Mother Mary Micaela, O.P.

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ROSARY CONVENT

Tynong; Melbourne; AUSTRALIA

Chant Class

Two countries. Two weeks. 24 Sisters. 30 masterclasses. One chant master. Neums, neums, neums were the order of the day, every day (except Sunday, the Biblically-endorsed day of rest), for a fortnight when M. de la Forrest Divonne returned from France to buff and polish the Sisters' Gregorian chant. Building on the groundwork laid down in December, 2016, Monsieur helped us fine-tune timing (it is suprising how difficult it can be to sing 'Amen' on one note, all at the same time and at the same speed!), diction (beware the 'm' at the end of a word), vocal technique (legato at all times, please), tone quality (all harsh sounds are out!) and melodic purpose/intention. This last point is needed to give spirit and life to the music, but we didn't master it straight away. We were rehearsing the Offertory for the Feast of the Epiphany - which we were delighted to sing, for the first time, on our Ceremony Day this year - and Monsieur felt compelled to inform us that our long melismatic passage on the word "Jerusalem" did not sound like we were in Jerusalem at all; more like captives in Babylon. We hope we sounded rather more like Jerusalem on the 6th of January, and we can't thank Monsieur enough for travelling so far and teaching us so much.



Fr Albert's Visit

The Sisters were blessed to have Fr Albert, O.P. extend his visit down south with us here in Tynong for nearly a month in January. After preaching the Sisters' retreat and officiating at the ceremonies on the Feast of the Epiphany, he was able to hold two fairly well-attended days of recollection for the Tertiaries. He also continued the series of Conferences he had begun during our retreat on the sermons of St Bernard on the mysteries of Christmastide. Father offered Mass in the Dominican rite daily, and prayed the Divine Office with us in our little chapel. Before Father flew to Quito, Ecuador, for the next leg of his journey, the novices and several other Sisters whizzed off with him to Phillip Island, where he made acquaintance with Port Phillip Bay and the wild ocean which he seemed to enjoy very much. Providence was kind in granting us gorgeous weather and multiple sightings of the elusive Fairy Penguins - we certainly hope Father will come by this side of the world again soon!



Our Lady's Garden

As befits their name, the Children of Mary has adopted the 'Our Lady Garden' at Corpus Christi Church here in Tynong. Their first task in this new role was a big one. The rose bushes had grown to an unruly size and the weeds had had a wonderful time putting forth new shoots - so the girls came with tools in hand and hats on heads, to cut back the rose bushes and weed the garden (which required exceptional perseverance), clean the fountain (without harming our new goldfish friends), and lay new mulch down, giving the garden a clean and crisp look. The Children of Mary were assisted by one of our Dominican Tertiaries, who gave the girls excellent advice on the care and upkeep of the garden. We were also very grateful to Our Lady, who blessed us with the most beautiful day.



Trains



Have you ever stood on the edge of a platform at a train station and watched as an express train whizzes by? If you have, you have an idea of what our summer holidays were like.

In early December, as soon as school had finished, we welcomed Monsieur Christian de la Forest Divonne once again who gave us intensive follow-up sessions in Gregorian Chant while last year's lessons were still fresh in our minds. Our primary duty is the recitation of the full Divine Office so it is *very* important that we do exert much effort in ensuring the office is sung beautifully, majestically and prayerfully. Thus we made every effort under Monsieur's direction to sing in unison, on the right note, at the right pace, with the right intensity and tone, to articulate every word and to put expression into our singing in order to communicate an extra and higher degree of beauty and spirituality. It really is quite difficult to tame a cacophony of twenty-four differently timbred voices into one sweet note, but Monsieur was very patient, and hopefully, God was pleased with our efforts!

In December we also welcomed the NZ community into our midst. This was the first time they had seen the new convent all put together so we proudly showed off our new kitchen complete with walk-in fridge and freezer, our brand new refectory, the new cells, the temporary chapel and the spacious community rooms. Gone are the days when we had to brave the elements and dodge large snails, kangaroos, spiders and sheep to get to our outside cabins. Gone too are the days when we had to sleep in cells installed with air-conditioning/heating units that sounded like a 747 taking off; when we had to live in walk-in wardrobes, store-rooms, and make-shift rooms with cardboard boxes and sheets as walls; when we had to compete with the rain while reading in the refectory; when getting breakfast involved much choreography and when driving to school every morning meant being chased by three very mad dogs.

It was lovely seeing the NZ Sisters again and we had a wonderful Christmas together. It was a time of much rejoicing, much unity of spirit and much show of talent since every year when we get together we entertain each other with little plays, ditties and skits.

Christmas was over too fast and before we knew it, it was time to pick up our retreat master, Father Albert O.P., from the airport and renew our spiritual batteries. Our retreat began on December 29th and ended on the day of our ceremony, January 6th. This year we had but one postulant from Samoa who generously asked to be admitted into the Order of Preachers. She is now clothed in the habit of the Dominican Order with the name Sister Maria Alapati (Samoan for Albert) and joins her blood Sister, Sister Mary Osanna, in the Novitiate. Both Sisters have an amazing vocation story to tell (they found us on Google) but this may have to wait until another edition. Sister Mary Anna (Australia), Sister Mary Jordan (Australia), Sister Maria Columba (Singapore) and Sister Mary Bernard (Philippines) renewed their vows at the ceremony as well. This is the last time they will do this before Final Profession.

We farewelled the NZ community all too soon, and then it was all stations go as we made the last urgent preparations to transform a heretofore rather disorganised space into a more orderly place for TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency), who came out for an on-site visit in connection with our Teachers' College application in early February. They will make a final decision on our application early April so your prayers for this intention would be much appreciated.

The train hasn't stopped (we've got on, as you can see) so we have to hang on to our veils and continue to strive Onwards and Upwards!

St Dominic's Convent

Wanganui; NEW ZEALAND

Camp Notre Dame de La Salette 2018

"Never see a need without doing something about it and make Our Lady smile" was the motto for this year's girls' summer camp from January 14th – 19th under the patronage of Our Lady of La Salette and St Mary MacKillop. Twenty-eight girls, four Sisters, four young lady helpers and Father Cranshaw, our chaplain, attended this camp held at Aongatete Outdoor Education Centre near Tauranga in the western Bay of Plenty. Father Cranshaw delivered inspiring talks to the campers about the apparitions of Our Lady of La Salette and the life of St Mary MacKillop. In keeping with the spirit of the camp the girls were encouraged to remove tears from their group's image of Our Lady of La Salette for each sacrifice and good act they performed each day in reparation to Our Lady. The girls also had the opportunity to learn about and enjoy the NZ bush, to undertake challenging activities that developed life skills, leadership, a positive personal attitude and teamwork. Campers earned badges upon the completion of these activities or for coming first in certain events.



Consecration as a Child of Mary

On the Feast of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, November 27th, our sodality of the Children of Mary assisted at Mass and then witnessed the consecration of another 5 members to Our Lady, three of whom are boarders at Signadou Hostel. At the consecration ceremony they each held a burning candle as they approached the altar. It was a reminder of how they are to be consumed, purified and to give of themselves in order to provide the light and example for others. It will be their future role as a mother whether spiritually or physically. It will be the total giving of self for others. A Child of Mary is not content with labouring for her own personal piety. She must be an apostle to others in all that she does. She must be guided by the standards of Our Lady and not those of the world.

During the ceremony the girls solemnly made their act of consecration to Mary Immaculate and then they were given their medal to remind them of the love they pledged. They wear this medal as a prized possession, a jewel, close to their heart at each sodality Mass, procession and on other solemn occasions. They were then clothed with the blue cloak to remind them of the patronage of Our Lady. This regalia shows their membership in this spiritual family. It is their armour for the battle which they will have to face in the world. Their blue garment is an outward sign of their inward consecration. The manual was then given to them, as a sword given to a new knight, to provide the counsels and prayers needed to help them increase in virtue, fight temptation and mount the ladder of holiness. It is through these means that they are recognised as a Child of Mary.





Cheese

Theme for St Dominic's College 2018



Indeed, cheese, that creamy substance produced by the often lengthy process of fermenting and separating, culturing and ageing; cheese, in all its delightful variations, shapes, sizes, colours, textures, flavours and odours is the chosen theme for the 2018 academic year at St Dominic's College, Wanganui. And for those of us who may be inclined to frown and look askance at this seemingly preposterous notion, G.K. Chesterton will be summoned to explain the whole matter, and simultaneously calm our sentiments that may border on alarm.

Chesterton's first-hand experience with different cheeses produced locally in several counties of England made him sing almost rapturously over what he saw as the perfect analogy of the aim of a good civilization. In each inn he tarried at, "the cheese was good," he tells us, "and in each inn it was different." This, he argued, is the great aim of all good civilizations: each must contain the essential elements (no one, he argued, can do without cheese); but each civilization must allow these elements to vary, just as each English county had its own cheesy aromas and textures, in order that the civilization which protects us may be as natural and as flexibly organic as a growing tree, rather than rigid and artificial like the protection of an umbrella.

Cheese, he concluded, is a good and "holy" thing that all must partake in (clearly it was a staple of the English diet in those days), but which may and *should* vary for it to be truly universal; and as for cheese, so, we may conclude, for customs that maintain a universal principle but apply it uniquely to a particular country and setting.

Rest assured, dear reader; an appreciation for a true notion of civilization such as Chesterton possessed is the *real* theme for our school year. By means of cultural dances, songs, and folklore, as well as other theme-based competitions, St Dominic's College intends to focus on the wonderful variety of heritages, backgrounds and cultures of our pupils, encouraging them to research the country of their ancestors, to delve into some of their family history, and to gain a wider knowledge of the culture of the people from whom their trace their ancestry.

One of the great dangers to the modern child is the glorification of the individual and the liberty of the perverted will. The narcissistic tendency to self-centredness and a disconnection with the world beyond oneself poses a grave threat to the spiritual life of our children. Through our school theme, we hope to impress upon the pupils the role they have to play in society and the debt which they owe to it; to promote in them a greater awareness of their connection to others; to teach them to see themselves as members of a group, working for the common good that is likewise the perfection of each individual. An appreciation for the past, a reverence towards those who have gone before us, a knowledge and love for the culture that makes us is a mark of a well-educated person.

At a deeper level, our theme will enhance the girls' appreciation of their heritage by helping them to see that the most important heritage to which they are heirs is the rich heritage of the Catholic Church. Who can boast of great popes, saints, Catholic empires and kings, all stemming from Our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whose Mystical Body we want our pupils to be proud to say they belong.

Appreciating the noble aspects of the many different cultures that their families originate from will help the pupils to understand the importance of their role in society which is to take up and continue our work of building a Christian civilization and culture – with its many customs that are as varied, unique, and as nourishing as cheese. It is therefore a holy and wholesome thing for our youngsters to eat cheese – that is, to learn about and to celebrate the customs and cultures of their ancestors – that they may come in contact with the admirably varying moods of Nature, and thereby draw closer to its Creator, Who is more delightful to the soul than all the songs, dances, folklore – and cheeses – of the world.

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Do I Have A Vocation?

"My daughter, think of Me, and for My part, I shall think of thee."

— Our Lord to Saint Catherine of Siena

Religious life is a school of perfection open to all. A religious vocation is a calling issued by Christ through His Church. It is the grandest privilege and the greatest honour that Christ can confer upon a young woman to give her the call to serve Him in religion.

Safe from the storms of the world, the religious gives her whole heart to the service and love of God. His rules and obedience make known to her the will of God, protecting her from dangerous temptations. The example of her companions spurs her on to nobler things. There is indeed **no happier state** of life on earth than the holy state of religion, bedewed with the waters of grace!

Dominican life
is the image of St. Dominic,
a mix of contemplation
and action.

"Contemplari et contemplata aliis tradere."

The Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of Wanganui welcomes enquiries from women interested in a Dominican vocation.

For more information, please contact:

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May God reward you for your generosity!

*Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for us!
We wish all our readers a very blessed
and holy Paschal season. Alleluia!*

HOW TO MAKE A DONATION

AUSTRALIA

Our account details in Australia are: Dominican Sisters of Wanganui,
Westpac Account, BSB: 033-636, A/C #334 277

Cheques can be made out to "The Dominican Sisters of Wanganui";

Cheques for the Convent Building Project must be made out to "St Thomas Aquinas College Convent Building Fund Account" and sent to: OP Motherhouse Project, P.O. Box 50, Tynong. VIC. 3813, Melbourne, Australia.

All donations for the Building of the Convent qualify for a tax deductible receipt

NEW ZEALAND

Our account details in New Zealand are: Dominican Sisters of Wanganui
Westpac Account, Victoria Ave, Wanganui BSB: 030-791, A/C #0728558

Cheques can be made out to "The Dominican Sisters of Wanganui" and sent to:
OP Motherhouse Project, 12b York Street, Wanganui, 4501, New Zealand.

SINGAPORE

Our account details in Singapore are: Friends of the International Priestly Society of St. Pius X
United Overseas Bank (UOB), A/C # 143-300-495-2, Changi Airport Branch

Airport Boulevard #B16-17 Passenger Terminal 2 Building Singapore Changi Airport
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UNITED STATES

Our account details in the United States are: Dominican Sisters of Wanganui,
Wells Fargo Bank, A/C # 2 015 569 425, Routing # 1210 42882

Cheques can be made out to "The Dominican Sisters of Wanganui" and sent to:
OP Motherhouse Project, Attn: Loren Vaccarezza, 1590 Berryessa Road, San Jose, CA 95133